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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAH #1675 3641210
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 301210Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3984
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6061
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3755
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3614
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4303
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4240
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1361
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001675

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/30/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [SOCI](#) [UN](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: DRUGS IN TURKMENISTAN: BURN, BABY, BURN

REF: A. ASHGABAT 1261
[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1301

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (SBU) On December 24, Poloff attended a drug burning ceremony run by the Turkmenistan State Counternarcotics Service (SCNS) in cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Turkmenistan conducts these ceremonies twice a year, and, according to government officials, burns all the drugs they have confiscated in their country during the six-month period. At this event, one ton and 279 kilograms of hashish, opium, and heroin were burned. Neither the Turkmen government officials nor the UNODC representatives stated where the confiscated drugs came from, but the diplomat from the Afghanistan Embassy said he assumed that most originated in Afghanistan. Locals say that some hashish is domestically produced in Turkmenistan, but the majority of narcotics in the country come from across the southern border with Afghanistan.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The diplomatic community was invited to participate in this drug burning ceremony, as they have at previous such events. The head of the SCNS in his opening remarks credited aid from UNODC as well as foreign governments, including the United States, for helping Turkmenistan bring its counternarcotics methods up to international standards. The diplomats were then invited to look at samples of the confiscated hashish, opium, and heroin and also encouraged to throw the packets of drugs into the fire.

[1](#)3. (U) State-run newspaper Neutral Turkmenistan reported on the drug burning ceremony, saying that it was part of the Turkmenistan Government's decision to take active steps against drug addiction. The newspaper also noted that Turkmenistan is doing its part to fight a global threat. In addition to the law enforcement angle, the newspaper article claimed that the state-sponsored youth organization "Galkynysh" is spreading information about the harmful effects of drugs, and that more youth are now doing sports

and living a healthy lifestyle.

14. (C) COMMENT: Despite the publicity surrounding the drug burning ceremony and other counternarcotics efforts in Turkmenistan, drug addiction remains a large problem. During the 1990s many young people started using drugs because of increased availability and rising unemployment. President Berdimuhamedov has focused on increasing law enforcement capacity to counter the drug problem (ref A) and has taken a more punitive stance towards drug-related crimes than former President Niyazov, refusing to amnesty people arrested on drug-related charges (ref B). While (unlike his predecessor) the current president has admitted that there is a drug abuse problem, he has done little in the way of prevention. For example, schools still do not have anti-drug education programs. END COMMENT.
CURRAN